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**NEW WEBSITE LINKS LANDLORDS AND RENTERS IN KING COUNTY**

*Free housing locator expands access to affordable housing*

SEATTLE – March 5, 2012 –The City of Seattle, King County, United Way of King County, Seattle Housing Authority and King County Housing Authority are pleased to announce the launch of a free housing locator website providing information about rental housing to residents throughout King County. HousingSearchNW.org – a web-based service supported by a toll-free call center offering service in multiple languages – lets landlords advertise properties free of charge, while renters can search for free to find rentals that fit their needs.

"Lack of English language skills should not be a barrier to finding housing, especially because our city is home to a large immigrant and refugee population," said Seattle Mayor Mike McGinn. "And so this new service, offered in many languages, answers a longstanding need in our community to connect renters directly with housing that is affordable to them."

Properties listed on HousingSearchNW.org include a wide range of publically-assisted and private, scattered-site housing. Prospective tenants can search for rentals according to specific needs, such as proximity to medical facilities, public transit and schools. Listings can be sorted by rent amount, ZIP Code, date available and other important factors. HousingSearchNW.org offers landlords 24-hour access to managing, adding and updating property listings, and listings can highlight amenities and include photos. The goal of the new service is to consolidate listings for housing that is affordable to people making around 80 percent of median income in King County (about \$65,000 for a family of four). This includes most rental housing in the county.

"This is an efficient use of technology to connect residents in need with rentals anywhere in the county that might be available to provide a home for their families," said King County Executive Dow Constantine.

As of last week, the site offered 1,221 individual vacancies for rent, with more than 18,550 rental units registered on the site. The number of searches taking place on the site on a daily basis has increased steadily, and the site is now averaging between 900 and 1,000 searches a day.

"We're excited about the ability of this service to connect our residents to housing opportunities," said Seattle Housing Authority Executive Director Tom Tierney. "We're encouraging property providers to take advantage of the free advertising and list their vacancies on HousingSearchNW.org to help make this service as useful as possible."

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“HousingSearchNW.org represents a collective approach to helping families find housing that they can afford,” notes King County Housing Authority Executive Director Stephen Norman. “This effort to coordinate across boundaries and pool resources will provide better outcomes and more efficient service to the region’s households.

The site is powered by Socialserve.com, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, dedicated to serving the affordable housing needs of communities. Seattle joins an ever-growing network of regions using Socialserve.com that currently spans 31 states. Users of similar sites maintained by Socialserve.com have attested to the effectiveness of this county- or state-wide approach.

William Huang is housing director for the City of Pasadena in California. He notes that, “It is widely believed that affordable housing in high cost areas is nearly non-existent. However, the Los Angeles County Housing Resource Center and its sister site, PasadenaHousingSearch.com, prove this concept to be false. Anyone, any day, for free, can utilize this powerful web-based tool to find thousands of housing units currently available at moderate income rents and below throughout the vast Los Angeles County area.

“This site in essence expands the number of affordable units by ‘finding’ them for those who need them, which is far less expensive and more expeditious than building new units. Affordable units exist, even in high cost areas, but finding them has always been difficult until now.

“This is not a static list of housing, but a dynamic site that only shows units that are currently available. This site also is a great benefit to landlords who, for free, can post and pull their listings 24/7 so they no longer receive calls from prospective tenants after the units are leased,” Huang said.

Lauren Rock is a resource specialist with the Assistive Technology Partnership in Lincoln, Nebraska, where she is involved with a similar site, [www.Housing.NE.gov](http://www.Housing.NE.gov). She’s had first-hand experience with the site from both sides of the equation – as a social service provider and as a tenant seeking housing. “Of course I knew about the site, because I check it frequently as a provider. When I needed a new place to live and had checked other resources without success, it finally occurred to me that I could use [www.Housing.NE.gov](http://www.Housing.NE.gov) to search for myself. I was really struck by how beneficial the site was from a user perspective. The information provided was so much more complete than through other sources. I could compare places I was interested in side-by-side, and I already knew what I was walking into once I went to see the place. I could see when the place I was interested in would be available, and that helped a lot.”

Jana Gottfried is a social worker for the Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health. She recently used the local Los Angeles site to find housing for one of her clients, and the site easily exceeded her expectations. “The first apartment we found accepted my client’s Section 8 voucher. He got an apartment with all utilities paid and he did not have to pay for a credit check.” Because user information on the site is so extensive, clients with special needs are able to zero in on apartments that will work for them.

Residents can search and list on [www.HousingSearchNW.org](http://www.HousingSearchNW.org) 24 hours a day or call a toll-free, multi-lingual call center for assistance: 1-877-428-8844, Monday through Friday, 6 a.m. to 5 p.m. Pacific Time.

The new service was created by local government agencies working with nonprofits including the Tenants Union, the Puget Sound Rental Housing Association and affordable housing developers. Operating costs are being provided for the first three years by the City of Seattle, King County, United Way of King County, Seattle Housing Authority and King County Housing Authority. Seattle Housing Authority serves as site administrator and fiscal agent.

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